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## Help Veterans Find a New Mission: Developing Military Recruiting Strategies

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The employment landscape is constantly shifting, and employers are always looking for the best source of new hires. Gaps between company requirements and candidate skills make it hard for recruiters to quickly find talent and successfully fill open positions, which has a dramatic impact on the bottom line. However, there's one group of candidates that are consistently overlooked by many companies: the military and veteran population. While many organizations fear that military candidates lack transferable skills or industry-specific experience, companies that target this population are finding high-quality, motivated, and dedicated employees. It's time to rethink military and veteran recruiting.

### Challenges

Returning veterans face numerous hardships – including higher unemployment than civilians. While unemployment hovers at around 6%<sup>1</sup>, the average unemployment for veterans is 9%<sup>2</sup>. With over 1 million service members returning from deployment during the next 5 years<sup>3</sup>, veterans face an uphill battle in finding a civilian job.

While members of the military worry about finding jobs, employers are nervous about recruiting them. Chief among their concerns is not knowing which military skills translate to civilian work – although over 10% of employers also indicate veterans are over-qualified for jobs they apply for, making it difficult to align them with the right position<sup>4</sup>.

### Why Recruit Military?

Despite high unemployment, over 70% of veterans feel prepared to enter the civilian workforce following active duty, and nearly 60% know what industry their skills transfer into<sup>5</sup>. Many members of the military have specialized training in high-tech areas, or have engaged in administrative and HR work under time-sensitive, stressful conditions.

Service members also tend to have a good educational background. 9% percent of civilians have less than a high school education, compared to only 1% of veterans<sup>6</sup> – for organizations with educational requirements, the service member talent pool is likely to yield results.

Military service also provides veteran candidates with the types of leadership skills many organizations are looking for in their new hires. Bench strength is a critical component of success, and finding candidates that can transition into a managerial role is a challenge. However, service members often have extensive experience taking on leadership positions, and are well-qualified for manager roles.

Service members have what companies want: dedication, strong work ethic, and specialized skills. The task is understanding what skills are available and targeting service members appropriately. The military and veteran population is large, and its members are looking for opportunities in civilian industries – for companies experiencing skills shortages, recruitment strategies focused on veterans may be the solution.

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Developing a recruiting strategy aimed at service members increases the odds of getting referrals and creating a network of potential candidates. Talent communities or military recruiting pages provide opportunities for service members to recommend one another for open positions, helping companies build a supply of applicants. In a time when proactive recruiting is increasingly important, candidate networks are essential.

## Developing a Strategy

Creating a military recruiting strategy requires knowing how to find, attract, and connect with active duty military candidates, veterans, and their networks. Assigning recruiters with a military background creates an instant point of connection for candidates, and provides a recruiter who can be trusted to understand the needs and interests of service members seeking civilian jobs.

Connecting with military candidates in the right locations is important. Events on bases help recruiters reach candidates who are exploring post-military career options, and creates opportunities to introduce your company to a new candidate pool. Developing relationships with military bases with on-site job fairs keeps your organization top-of-mind for potential candidates. Military bases provide networking opportunities and connections to other locations.

New job seeking methods have not passed the military by, either, making it important for a service member oriented recruiting strategy to include social and mobile recruiting. Many recruiters who specialize in the military field have noticed a drastic increase in usage of social media by the active duty military population during the past several years, offering recruiters new avenues for proactive recruiting and relationship-building.

1. BLS.gov, 2014
2. Congressional Research Service, 2014
3. ERE, 2013
4. CareerBuilder, 2013
5. ibid
6. Congressional Research Service, 2014

## Proactive Recruiting

Recruiting strategies that have worked in the past are no longer effective for finding top talent. Companies that engage in proactive recruiting and relationship-building and widen the nets they use to find top talent will become more successful. A strong military and veteran recruiting strategy can act as a jumpstart to proactive recruiting solutions that push your organization ahead of the competition. •

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